

MONTHLY NEWS OF SAINT PAUL BENSON

Inspiration

March 2021

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

Greetings friends,

As we enter the month of March, I find myself thinking about how strange the passage of time has been this past year. Perhaps you have also found yourself wondering about the fluidity of time, how some days have seem very long, others quite short. Sometimes I am unclear what day of the week it is and other times I have a very precise knowledge of each hour as it passes.

I find myself looking at my calendar and pausing on March 15th, the one-year anniversary of our first PianoSide worship service. I remember the moment a few days before, when I realized that we would not be gathering for worship together in person on Sunday - my mind racing to figure out an alternative way to offer worship on short notice. I remember meeting online with Kristin Camp and Hank Robinson to think through what a recorded service might be like, and I remember Jerry Brabec's willingness to first give it a try and then to lead us forward into the next weeks, month and year. A year prior, I was still at South Gate UMC in Lincoln; a few months prior I would have laughed and laughed if you had told me Saint Paul would have our own YouTube channel posting original content at least four times weekly. And yet, here we are.

Today, I celebrate our congregation's resilience this past year, and I celebrate a new worship service that was born out of sudden necessity and has become part of our regular schedule. I also am looking forward to working with our reopening team, comprised of our clergy and a group of laity, to plan to add people back to our worship services. We are beginning by adding a small "studio audience" to our 10:00 a.m. Sunday live stream worship. If you are interested in being part of this group, please email or call the church office to be added to the waiting list; at this point we know we have a cap of 65 people in the sanctuary (25% capacity) and hope to add ten people per week. In addition, you will find a survey inside this issue that will help us assess how many worship services will be necessary to meet our current needs for in-person worship. It is my hope that all of you know we want you to be comfortable, and that both online and in-person attendance "count" as participation. Towards that end, soon you will find an online attendance sign-in so you can let us know you joined us for worship - no matter what day you join us - and list prayer concerns.

Thank you for your support and care of Saint Paul, one another and the clergy and staff of this church - we look forward towards this next year in our faith journey together.

Rev Stephanie

Saint Paul Welcomes District Office

We are pleased to welcome the office of the UMC Missouri River District to our fourth floor. District Superintendent Rev Chad Anglemeyer and Administrative Assistant Kris Eschliman will move into two of the offices on our upper level in mid-March. An appropriate agreement for the use of this space has been reached with the Great Plains Conference Trustees, and will be reviewed annually.

Saint Paul Benson

5410 Corby St.
Omaha, NE 68104

402-556-2433
FAX 402-939-0055

www.stpaulbenson.org

E-mail:
saintpaul@stpaulomaha.org

Staff

Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede
Lead Pastor

Rev. Marta Wheeler
Associate Pastor

Rev. Jerry Brabec
Minister of Worship

Sue Bacon
Communications Coordinator

Noni Cambridge
Bookkeeper

Chris Jones
Building Engineer

Jayne Meisinger
*Membership Secretary/
Financial Secretary*

Saint Paul
Child Development Center
402-556-3885
Katy Smith, *Director*

Community Counseling
402-354-6891 x23
Julie Lord, *LIMHP & PLADC*
Tabitha Jameson, *MA, LIMHP*

The Inspiration is published monthly. Information is due to the editor by the 19th of the month to be included in the next issue.

Editor: Sue Bacon

To contact the editor:

Phone 402-556-2433

Email.....
sbacon@stpaulomaha.org

Address: ... 5410 Corby Street
Omaha, NE 68104

March Church Calendar

Special Communal Offering for UMCOR

Sundays

8:00 a.m. PianoSide Worship Available on YouTube
10:00 a.m. LiveStream Worship on Facebook
11:00 a.m. Dyno Kids on Zoom
12:15 p.m. Kirundi/Kiswahili Worship Livestream

Sunday, March 7

5:30 p.m. Youth. Location TBD

Sunday, March 14

3:00-6:00 p.m. HomeDish curbside event

Sundays, March 14, 21, 28

3:00 p.m. Youth

Sunday, March 28

10:00 a.m. Palm Sunday Worship/LiveStream on Facebook

Mondays through Fridays

7:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Child Development Center open
9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Church Office Open (sometimes closes at 3:00 pm, please call ahead)

Mondays

10:00 a.m. Clergy Meeting

Tuesdays

9:00 a.m. Lectio Divina Prayer Group
4:00 p.m. PianoSide Taping

Tuesday, March 2

4:15 p.m. Serving Dinner at Siena/Francis House;
call the church office if you are interested in serving

Tuesday, March 16

11:00 a.m. Health Ministries

Wednesdays

11:00 a.m. Staff Check-in

Wednesdays, beginning March 3

5:00 p.m. Spiritual Book Study on Zoom

Thursdays

6:00 p.m. Bell Choir Rehearsal
7:00 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, April 1

7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Worship/LiveStream on Facebook

Friday, April 2

7:00 p.m. Good Friday Worship/LiveStream on Facebook

Saturday, March 13

8:30 a.m. Book Club Meeting on Zoom

Save the Date:

Women's Annual Spiritual Retreat: October 10-11 (Sunday and Monday) at Saint Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler, NE.

March is shaping up to be more than just our yearly Lenten spiritual journey. It is also a journey into what it means to return to “in-person” worship. Being able to gather for weekend services officially came to a halt on March 14/15 last year. We have waited long and are ready to cautiously begin assembling once again. Each week, as we move toward Easter, more of you will be encouraged to be a part of a “studio audience” for 10:00 a.m. worship in the Sanctuary and, mid-month at the Saturday evening at 5:00, Roth Chapel service. Since we continue in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, we must remember to: **mask**; practice physical and socially **distance** with personal and environmental **hygiene**; be mindful of when you or others are ill and of crowded settings; participate in **active screening** and follow quarantine and isolation guidelines when necessary. More “how-to’s” for worship may be found in this issue. Watch for special congregational mailings that will also promote the ways and times we may return to more “in-person” forms of worship as we journey toward a brighter Easter day!

In her reflections about the time in which we find ourselves musical composer, arranger and poet, **Alice Parker**, writes, “...Being a musician is one of the most human things we can be. We are really exalting our voices, our breath, our minds, our imaginations, our love of language, our love of musical forms and possibilities. And we are engaging in something which...includes the generations in a way that almost nothing else can, and leaps over differences in class and education and financial status and all of those other things. It’s like the sound that fills a room, fills our hearts. And so it’s one of the most human and one of the most rewarding and one of the most civilizing things that we can do, is to sing together. And boy, do I recommend that we do a whole lot of it the minute we can get back together again and sing in the same room with each other.”

Clergy Corner—Rev. Jerry Brabec

Sunday, April 12, 2020 was a celebration day of sorts. Not a national holiday or a “key to the city” kind of event, but a special day only to this writer. Fifty years prior, on Easter Sunday in 1970, a very nervous but excited eighth grader slid across the bench and set out to offer his first organ prelude. The notes to “Were You There” had been fairly carefully practiced over the previous ten weeks. The ruling Session of the little Presbyterian Church in Council Bluffs had awarded two \$50 scholarships, enough for ten organ lessons each, to a high school junior who had achieved nine years of piano playing and a fourteen year old hack who had given up piano lessons years before, favoring a more lucrative career in the form of a paper route! By the time summer had ended, a one month on/one month off schedule was in place, but the details from there seem a bit sketchy, including a six month stint with a left leg cast. With the summer of 1971 and the graduation of the high school-er, it fell to the hack to provide appropriate music for weekly worship. And so began this lifelong pursuit of the ministry of worship. Since we weren’t able to celebrate the Easter holiday last year (no need to remind you as to why) it seems appropriate to lift it up this time around. Weather in the Midlands being what it is, there were several years that Palm Sunday was a wash due to spring snow-mageddons but, the memory of no Easter is truly a foreign one. Perhaps that’s what makes the thought of returning to “in person” worship in time for the Paschal celebration so much sweeter. It will be Saint Paul’s own symbol of resurrection of sorts. The Body of Christ assembling to proclaim once again, “He is risen indeed!”

Rev. Jerry

Communal Offering: United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)

This special offering was formerly known as One Great Hour of Sharing. By giving we help underwrite UMCOR’s administrative costs so that all designated gifts will go to the project we specify. Your gifts ensure UMCOR’s response in times of crisis so that 100% of gifts to UMCOR help those who need it most. This fund is administered by The General Board of Global Ministries. As we respond, we recognize Jesus in those who are reeling in the wake of disaster.

Survey

In-Person Worship

Good news! We have started planning for a return to in-person worship. We're not ready yet - but with your help, we will get there soon. Take a moment to complete this brief survey, and as you do, keep in mind the following:

- All in attendance will be required to wear masks and maintain social distancing.
- Services will be held at 10AM Sundays in the Sanctuary.
- Capacity will be limited to 25%.
- Services will be limited to 40 minutes in length to reduce restroom use.
- Everyone must enter through the north (parking lot) door.
- The elevator will not be available.

1) For starters, we plan to invite a "studio audience" to our 10AM Sunday Livestream, with the number of people in the "audience" increasing each week. This will help us work out the logistics of in-person worship. Are you interested in participating in the "studio audience?"

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many total family members would be in your group? ____

2) Would you attend a 5pm Saturday service in Roth Chapel? (Note: the southside entrance on Corby Street may be easier for some to navigate. All other rules listed above would apply.)

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many total family members would be in your group? ____

3) Easter is Sunday, April 4th. The plan is to conduct multiple services in multiple spaces of the church to accommodate all who wish to attend. At this time, are you interested in attending Easter Sunday worship?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many total family members would be in your group? ____

4) Considering all of this information, how likely are you to attend in-person worship? Please check one of the boxes below:

Not at All Likely to Attend	Probably Would Not Attend	Not Sure	Probably Would Attend	Would Attend Every Week
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5) What can we do to help you feel comfortable participating in worship, in-person or from home?
 Note: we plan to continue the 8AM Pianoside 10AM Facebook Livestream services indefinitely!

Name _____ Phone or Email Address _____

Please return to the church office as soon as possible. An online version is also available on our website, Facebook page, enews or the church office will email it directly to you upon request.

Mercy & Justice Updates

Undie Sunday

Thank you to everyone who brought underwear, socks and other warm items to the church. These “undies” are being taken to the Stephen Center for distribution to their clients.

Hat & Mitten Tree

Also thanks for items given to the hat & mitten tree this season. Since we last reported, an additional 58 hats, 2 pair of gloves and 2 jackets were delivered to Benson West and Fontenelle Elementary Schools by members of the Mercy & Justice team.

Online giving

We encourage members, when possible, to set up their online giving using a checking or savings account rather than a credit or debit card to reduce transaction fees incurred by the church

Spiritual Book Study with Rev. Marta Wheeler Beginning Wednesday, March 3, 5-6 p.m.

The Soul's Slow Ripening: 12 Celtic Practices for Seeking the Sacred

Author Christine Valters Paintner uses reflections, stories, guided activities, prayer experiences, and a variety of creative arts to help you patiently and attentively listen to God's invitation. Please contact the church office if you're interested and further information will be provided.

Learning, Serving, Praying, Playing

Last month the youth group met on zoom one Sunday afternoon and listened to El Siebert's story of how he was called by God into ministry and the purpose of serving others has been a focal point of his life. We also observed a pre-Lenten service and packets were given to help guide them as families during Lent.



They led people in the congregation in a fun zoom Bible Jeopardy game! Relationship building is especially important during a pandemic.

Plans are beginning to take hold for a safe youth trip from June 21-25, 2021. We will be working and playing outside the great majority of the time and safety will be foremost in mind as we focus on serving God and building relationships with one another.

March 7, Sunday, 5:30 p.m.; location TBD

March 14, 21, 28, Sunday, 3:00 p.m.

Dyno Kids

The Dyno Kids meet every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. on Zoom. As we continue our series of “*Children Called by God*” we hope members will consent to telling their stories of hearing God's call and how you were guided in life. El Siebert's story was well received by the Dyno Kids!

While meeting the needs of our busy families, we are planning 3 days of fabulous **Vacation Bible School!**

July 14 and 15 (Wednesday and Thursday) will be virtual. Bags will be handed out ahead of time to those who have pre-registered.

July 18 (Sunday) we will meet at church and have a very fun time following the worship service.

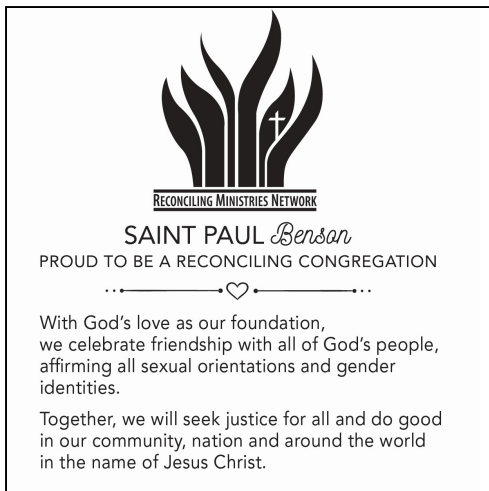
Check us out on the Dyno Kids FaceBook group and also on you-tube for weekly videos. New members are always welcome to join this fun group!

SAINT PAUL *Benson*

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OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68104

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inTouch

Hospitalizations

Amber Leed-Kelly, Kathy Rice

Christian Sympathy

To Dorothy Sharp and family in the death of her husband, Walter.

To Belinda Johnson and family in the death of her husband, Warren.

To Vance Taylor and family in the death of his son, Douglas.

Congratulations

To Nick & Mary Stolzer's grandson and granddaughter-in-law in the birth of their daughter, Leighton, born November 12, 2020. Leighton's great uncle and great aunt are Hank & Susie Robinson.

Memorials

For Douglas Taylor—Nick & Mary Stolzer, Vance Taylor, Jack & Judy Stransky, Ryan & Lauren Edwards

Memorials (continued)

For Bonnie Sibert—Bryan & Heather Ruhler, Dale & Kathy Combs, Elaine Grasso, Jerry Hall, Richard & Jane Condon, Harvey & Janelle Springer, Thomas & Sandra Helligso, Randall & Julie Sibert, Michael & Linda Waldmann, John & Claudia Griger, Andy & Abigail Berthold, Arnold & Joyce Fencl, Gladys Lantz, MUD Employees, Alan & Julie Davis, Pat Golden, Jerry Brabec

For Ruby Meck—Jerry Brabec, John & Claudia Griger, Jean Schmid, Gladys Lantz, Ronald & Patsy Fittje, Dolores Doyle, Kenneth McEwen, Larry & Carol Aldrich, John & Betty Pestal, Vance Taylor

For Walter Sharp—Gladys Lantz

For Warren Johnson—Gladys Lantz

For Dennis Sutton—John & Betty Pestal

For Sophie "Brabec"—Pat Golden

For Bob & Jean O'Dell—Jim O'Dell Family